

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

25X1

12 March 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Pravda on SALT

1. The piece relating to SALT in last Saturday's Pravda ("An Important Problem" by Observer, Pravda, 7 March 1970) has rightly drawn considerable attention in the US. It was no doubt meant to do just that. There is every reason to suppose that Observer was speaking for the highest authorities and was trying to convey a message to Washington. This is not the first Soviet statement since Helsinki on SALT-related issues, but it is certainly the most careful, deliberate, and purposeful, either public or private.

2. There is much in the piece which is important and which echoes what was said in the privacy of the Helsinki conference chamber. Its exposition of the dynamics of the arms race, including the inter-action of offensive and defensive weapons, and its claim of strategic

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parity with the US are essentially the same as those rendered at Helsinki. It reiterates that SALT can only succeed if it aims for an agreement which provides "equal security" to both sides. It says even more emphatically that the USSR is quite ready to begin with a partial agreement. It reinforces the impression that the Russian position is, and will be, that control of ABM deployments is the point at which to break into the circle. In all these respects, the statement not only repeats Helsinki but surely anticipates Vienna as well.

3. The Pravda statement is in some ways disingenuous and self-serving, as no piece in Pravda could fail to be. Moscow knows very well that the pace of its own deployment of SS-9s causes concern in this country and generates pressure for the construction of stronger defenses, yet Pravda goes no further in addressing this issue than to say that its build-up of strategic forces was a reply to an earlier US build-up. More time is spent in summoning the shade of John Foster Dulles than would seem necessary if the sole aim were reasoned persuasion rather than propaganda. But the piece is not

mere cant. It is on the whole sober and intended to be read as a serious expression of Soviet aims and anxieties.

4. Although there is a lot of self-righteousness in the Pravda piece, we doubt that Moscow is much concerned at this stage to write its case into the public record against the possibility that SALT will fail. Nor is the article mainly an effort to convince Soviet domestic skeptics that the Kremlin has been, and will remain, on the right track. Though they no doubt have these considerations in mind, the Soviets are hoping chiefly to influence pending US defense decisions and the formation of the US position at Vienna.

5. Moscow realizes, of course, that any sign from it that US weapons policy is putting SALT in jeopardy is bound to increase to some degree the US domestic opposition to this policy. Neither the argumentation nor the style of the Pravda piece suggests, however, that it was fashioned primarily for this purpose. The message seems designed more to influence the Administration than to nourish its domestic critics. The message might be summarized something like this:

We gave you good evidence at Helsinki that we take a responsible attitude toward SALT. We told you then why we were serious and what, in broad terms, we hoped to accomplish. We say those things again. But, in the meantime, some of your officials have made statements which seem to cast doubt on your own seriousness. Moreover, you have taken actions affecting ABM deployment which we had thought you might hold back on until we had had further discussions at Vienna. You should not think this does not give us cause for concern. We still think there is a good chance we can make a beginning on arms limitations, but, unless you show some restraint, we could change our minds.

6. Moscow could not have failed to express its anxiety about US intentions with respect to ABM deployment.* To a degree its concern is certainly real. The issue having been brought to the forefront by Pravda, it can be expected that the Soviets will press their private inquiries and their case both before and at Vienna. The Pravda piece implicitly denies that the Soviets are seeking to build a counter-force capability. But it will be worth seeing if in the course of their explorations the Soviets will be ready to speak with some frankness about the SS-9.

* The revival by Marshal Grechko in late February of claims concerning Soviet ABM capabilities (after a two-year period of complete silence on this subject) is no doubt also a reaction to recent US steps.